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# ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER  
OF HEALTH

MEDICAL OFFICER  
FOR  
MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE

AND

CHIEF SANITARY INSPECTOR

OF THE

BOROUGH OF TAUNTON  
FOR THE YEAR 1948



Public Health Department,  
St. Paul's House,  
TAUNTON.

4th October, 1949.

The Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses,

**THE BOROUGH OF TAUNTON.**

Mr. Mayor, Madam and Gentlemen,

I have to submit an abridged annual report for the year 1948 which is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Health in their circular 3/49.

This year has seen the coming into operation of much new legislation—including the National Health Services Act, and the National Assistance Act. Under the former our power and duties as a Maternity and Child Welfare Authority were transferred to the Somerset County Council, and the Regional Hospital Board, while under the latter certain duties with regard to aged and infirm persons which we had exercised under Section 48 of the Taunton Corporation Act 1937 were cancelled and replaced by Section 47 of the National Assistance Act and which lacks some advantage regarding notice in our own Act.

The statistics for this year were generally satisfactory and require no comment.

It is, however, most satisfactory to report that not one true case of Diphtheria occurred, for the first time since this dangerous disease became notifiable in 1890.

It is disheartening to see so many unfit houses still occupied—while gross overcrowding persists and is responsible for much mental and physical ill-health or discomfort.

I must express my gratitude to Alderman A. J. West, J.P., as Chairman of the Borough Health Committee for his continued interest and support in spite of his many other public duties and to the Staff of the Department for loyal co-operation.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN ALLEN,  
*Medical Officer of Health.*

## BOROUGH OF TAUNTON.

### Annual Report of the Medical Officer for the Year 1948.

#### SUMMARY OF STATISTICS.

Registrar General's estimate of the resident population .....	32,870
Number of inhabited houses at the end of 1948 according to the rate books .....	8,858
Rateable value at the end of 1948 .....	£245,159
Estimated product of a penny rate .....	£960
Births live and still:—	
Male 312. Female 261. Total 573.	17.4
Births live : Male 307. Female 258. Total 563.	rate 17.1
Births still : Male 5. Female 3. Total 8.	per 0.24
Births illegitimate, live and still :—	1,000
Male 22. Female 16. Total 38.	population 1.1
Deaths : Male 188. Female 166. Total 354.	10.7
Infant Mortality. Deaths under one year:—	
Male 9 Female 5. Total 14.	Rate per 1,000
	live births 24.7
Infant Mortality, legitimate : rate per 1,000 legitimate births .....	26.5
Infant Mortality, illegitimate 0 per 1,000 illegitimate births .....	00.0
Infant Mortality under one month per 1,000 live births .....	19.4
Deaths from diarrhoea in infants under two years of age : 2 rate per 1,000 live births .....	3.5

### GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES.

#### Maternity and Child Welfare.

The following services were provided by you until the 5th July, when with the coming into operation of the National Health Service Act 1946 they were taken over by the Somerset County Council or Regional Hospital Board.

#### Ante-Natal Clinic.

Held twice a week at the Health Centre, Tower Lane. The Monday afternoon clinic was conducted by a woman doctor and the Wednesday afternoon by midwives. The number of women who attended before their confinement was 172 and total attendances were 986.

#### Obstetric Consultant.

This service was provided for 13 cases at the request of the doctor attending.

#### Maternity Home, Canon Street.

This has ten beds including one in an isolation room. The number of cases admitted was 94.

#### Home Help Scheme.

This was provided for five cases.

#### Infant Welfare Centres.

There were two premises used for this purpose. One at the Health Centre, Tower Lane, was open on Tuesday and Thursday

afternoons, the other at Halcon Chapel—which serves a large housing estate—was open on Wednesday afternoons.

Both were very well attended—and with the development of new housing estates north of the town, there is need for another north of the railway. Total attendances number 3,835, while 226 infants were brought for the first time.

### **Health Visitors.**

There were three who also had duties as Infant Life Protection Visitors and School Nurses. Approximately half their time was given to Maternity and Child Welfare.

### **Day Nursery.**

This is a prefabricated building erected in Victoria Park, East Reach. It has 45 places of which 14 were for infants age 0—2 years and 31 for infants aged 2—5 years. A charge of 2/- per day was made.

The attendance has been very good and the demand for places was unsatisfied.

### **Illegitimate Children.**

Arrangement was made for the admission of two unmarried mothers prior to their confinement to Exmoor House, Dulverton—which is a hostel maintained by the Somerset County Council for this purpose.

Two illegitimate children were being maintained in residential nurseries provided by the Somerset County Council.

### **The Care of Premature Infants.**

The special arrangements made for the care of these included:—

- (1) Particulars on the birth notification form if weighing  $5\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. or less at birth.
- (2) Retention for a suitable period in the Maternity Home or Hospital if necessary.
- (3) Notification to this department prior to discharge so that the Health Visitor could give special supervision.

In the period between the 1st January and the 5th July, 1948, there were 474 birth notifications, many of these were from hospitals or maternity homes and so included births not belonging to the Borough. Of these births 29 were notified as premature, including 7 from the Borough and 22 from outside the Borough. Among these there were eight deaths, 3 from the Borough and 5 from outside.

Six of these occurred within 24 hours of birth—one between 24 hours and one week old and one over one week of age. The three Borough cases died in their homes while the five out of Borough cases all took place in institutions.

## **The Promotion of Cleanliness and Elimination of Verminous Conditions.**

The three school nurses pay regular visits to all the schools and examine the children present. It is now most unusual to find a child with a verminous head, but when this does happen a home visit is made and any younger children not attending school examined.

Suitable advice is given and a preparation containing D.D.T. applied.

Scabies has almost disappeared and it is now most unusual to discover a case. The unit for treatment of cases of Scabies at Musgrove Park Hospital was open on Tuesday and Friday afternoons. The attendances were:—

			<i>From Borough.</i>	<i>From outside Borough.</i>
Number of cases	...	...	88	12
Number of treatments	...	...	235	23

## **Welfare Foods Service.**

The distribution of Cod Liver Oil, Vitamin Tablets, Orange Juice and National Dried Milk through the Infant Welfare Centres at St. Paul's House and Halcon Chapel continued.

## **Sheets for Expectant Mothers.**

The issue of coupon equivalent certificates to expectant mothers who were to be confined at home and had booked a midwife for this continued, until taken over by the County Medical Officer of Health, with other Maternity and Child Welfare functions, on the 5th July.

During the period 223 certificates of 6 coupon value, and 4 of 4 coupon value, were sent to 79 mothers at the request of the midwives booked to attend them.

## **SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.**

### **Water Supply.**

This is derived from an upland surface on the Blackdown Hills whence it is collected in three reservoirs, then subjected to filtration through rapid sand filters—chlorine added, and then held in covered storage reservoirs prior to distribution.

Samples of water from a main tap in different parts of the town were taken for bacteriological examination at least once a week. Of the 53 samples taken all except two showed no probable coliform bacilli in 100 m.l. Of the two which did not reach this high standard one showed two and the other one probable coliform bacilli per 100 m.l.



Samples of the raw water and the water immediately after treatment was taken at fortnightly intervals. A sample of filtered water subject to chemical analysis on the 25th August was reported by the County Analyst as follows:—

		<i>Results in parts per 100,000</i>
Physical characters clear and bright		
Reaction .....	p H = 8.3	
Total solids .....	15.6	
Alkalinity (as Ca CO <sub>3</sub> ) .....	7.0	
Total hardness .....	6.5	
(a) permanent .....	3.0	
(b) temporary .....	3.5	
Chlorine (in terms of sodium chloride) .....	2.7	
Nitrogen as saline and free ammonia .....	0.001	
Nitrogen as albuminoid ammonia .....	0.02	
Nitrogen as nitrates .....	Nil	
Oxygen absorbed from Permanganate (4 hours at 80° F.) .....	0.1	
Free Carbon Dioxide .....	0.2	
Sediment .....	None	

A separate supply from Leigh reservoir is provided for parts of Taunton rural district. This is passed through slow sand filters and chlorine added prior to distribution. Samples of this were taken once a month for bacteriological examination. In each of these there were no probable coliform bacilli in 100 m.l. There are about 8,858 inhabited houses and with the exception of 51 all are supplied from public mains direct to the houses.

Of the 51 without a direct supply 46 are in Confirmed Clearance Orders still occupied under requisition or licence, four are supplied from wells and one from a spring.

## NATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT 48, SECTION 1947

The purpose of this section under which we have a duty is to secure necessary care and attention for any person suffering from grave chronic disease or being aged—infirm—or physically incapacitated, is living in unsanitary conditions and is in need of proper care and attention. It cancels Section 48 of the Taunton Corporation Act 1937 which contained similar provision and had the advantage that it only required three days' notice when an application had to be made to the court, instead of the seven days required by the National Assistance Act.

Three cases were investigated during the year; two of these did not appear to come within the terms of the Act, so that no action was possible under it. In the third a woman in lodgings suffering from incontinence of urine and faeces and an apparent paresis of the lower limbs, it was found necessary to serve a formal notice but this was not

proceeded with as the case proved to be of unsound mind, and was removed to a mental hospital before the application could be entertained.

### **Food Poisoning. Outbreaks.**

Three separate outbreaks were investigated.

(1) In June was connected with school meals served in the first van delivery from a central school kitchen and affected about 80 of the 1,300 children and adults who ate it. The symptoms were mainly colicky pains and diarrhoea occurring about six hours after eating the meal, which consisted of roast mutton, beans (dried) with tomato sauce, new potatoes with melted margarine, and a baked pudding with a white cornflour sauce. The only foods it was possible to examine were cornflour, dried milk, beans, tomato and soup powder. No pathogenic organisms were found in these while chemical analysis disclosed no poisonous metal. Samples of faeces from the staff of the kitchen disclosed no pathogenic organisms, but samples of faeces from two children affected shewed identical strains of *Bac. coli* of an abnormal type. This was the only school kitchen in the area without a steam sterilizer while the water supply was defective at the time.

This defect has now been remedied.

There were no notifications and no deaths.

(2) In June, July and August, when five cases were notified, including one death in a woman age 94 years. The main symptom was diarrhoea. Reports on the faeces shewed that these contained *Salmonella typhi* murium. Milk was implicated as a possible cause, and investigations of one supply shewed a history of diarrhoea among some of the staff. Further examination shewed that some of these were carriers and they were suspended from duty until examination shewed that they could no longer be regarded as carriers.

(3) In September, when eleven out of fourteen people living in one house were taken ill with headache, nausea or vomiting one hour after a meal consisting of bread and butter and jam, steamed suet pudding, and stewed apples, or six hours after a meal consisting of fried sausages, potatoes, french beans and roast beef. As some of those suffering had not eaten the earlier meal it appeared probable that the cause was in the last meal. No samples of the sausages or the apple were available but chemical and bacteriological examination of the other foods and bacteriological examination of the dejecta from the worst cases disclosed nothing abnormal. The enamel saucepan used to cook the apples was tested by boiling in it a one per cent solution of citric acid for half an hour. No arsenic or antimony was found in the solution. The cause of this outbreak was unknown.



## Notifiable Infectious Disease.

A return made to the Registrar General after the end of each quarter includes the number and variety of cases originally notified and the final numbers corrected by later information received from the Isolation Hospital or other sources.

A summary of these is given below:—

<i>Disease.</i>	<i>Originally Notified.</i>	<i>Removed to Isol. Hosp.</i>	<i>Corrected Numbers.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>
Scarlet Fever .....	50	37	48	—
Diphtheria .....	1	1	—	—
Whooping Cough .....	42	2	42	—
Measles .....	188	9	188	—
Erysipelas .....	5	1	5	—
Cerebro-Spinal Fever .....	3	3	1	—
Ac. Poliomyelitis .....	—	—	—	—
Ac. Polio-encephalitis .....	1	1	—	—
Encephalitis Lethargica .....	1	—	1	1
Puerperal pyrexia .....	32	11	32	—
Typhoid Fever .....	1	1	1	—
Para-typhoid Fever .....	—	—	—	—
Pneumonia .....	10	1	10	17*
Dysentery .....	3	1	1	—
Ophthalmia Neonatorum .....	1	1	—	—
Food Poisoning .....	14	7	16	1

\* Includes all forms.

## Prevention of Diphtheria.

A scheme with this object in view has been in operation here since 1938 and from then to the end of 1948 6,728 children have been immunized. No child who has had this treatment has died from diphtheria. It is interesting to compare the number of cases notified and the number of deaths since the scheme started.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Number Immunised.</i>	<i>Cases Notified.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>
1939 .....	331	33	—
1940 .....	83	8	1
1941 .....	2,505	13	1
1942 .....	1,020	8	—
1943 .....	341	25	—
1944 .....	360	13	1
1945 .....	477	5	—
1946 .....	536	1	—
1947 .....	460	3	—
1948 .....	615	—	—

It should be stated that none of those dying had been immunized. It will also be seen that as the number who had been protected increased that there was a steady diminution in the cases notified while in 1948 for the first time since the disease became notifiable in

1890 there was not even one true notification. There are however still parents who will either not take the small amount of trouble to bring their children twice for this purpose or in a very small number who do not believe in it. It was estimated that at the end of 1948 about 60 per cent of the children aged 0—4 years and 73 per cent of those aged 5—14 years had been protected against Diphtheria.

### **Refuse Disposal and Collection.**

Domestic refuse is collected twice a week. It is dumped on ground near the Sewerage Works. The method of doing this is not satisfactory in that the dumped refuse is not covered.

# ANNUAL REPORT

## of the

### CHIEF SANITARY INSPECTOR.

#### For the year 1948

To the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses.

Mr. Mayor, Madam and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in submitting my annual report for the twelve months ending December 31st, 1948.

### SUMMARY OF VISITS AND INSPECTIONS.

#### Housing and General Sanitary Work.

Houses inspected under the Public Health and Housing Acts ....	198
Re-inspections .....	353
Infectious Diseases, in connection with .....	304
Factories .....	96
Drainage, in connection with .....	168
Rodent Control (excluding visits by Rodent Operator) .....	63
Public Conveniences .....	29
Houses let in lodgings .....	15
Moveable Dwellings .....	87
Stables, piggeries .....	22
Offensive Trades .....	42
Smoke Observations .....	25
Verminous Premises .....	18
Common Lodging House .....	4
Refuse Disposal .....	28
Shops .....	7
Cinemas and places of entertainment .....	16
Schools .....	10
Interviews .....	71
Miscellaneous Sanitary Visits .....	112
<hr/>	
Total	1668

**Housing Repairs.** It is still impossible to make use of Section 9 of the Housing Act, 1936, for the purpose of the reconditioning of the older type of dwellinghouse. The cost of repairs today cannot be reconciled to the value of house property, and therefore only the more serious defects can be remedied. These are dealt with by notices served under Section 92 of the Public Health Act, 1936. During the year repairs were effected under this Section at 57 houses.

**Defence (General) Regulations, 1939.** Thirty five houses which have been the subject of Clearance or Demolition Orders under the Housing Act, 1936, are occupied under powers conferred by these Regulations. Occupation is permitted by licence granted by the Local Authority. The licences run for periods of six months and are renewable. Your Inspectors are responsible for seeing that reasonable

standards are maintained in these properties before licences to re-let are issued. During the year one house that had been subject to licence was closed as being unfit for further occupation.

**Public Health Act, 1936— Section 24.** During the year 16 sewers on private property have been cleansed by the Corporation. One sewer was repaired and amended by the Corporation at the expense of the owners. Sewers dealt with under this Section are those that were maintainable by the owners under previous Public Health Acts.

**Rodent Control.** The systematic treatment of premises for the destruction of rodents was continued during the year under a scheme submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. This scheme provided for the free treatment of private dwelling house property, and the recovery of full cost in the case of business premises, the Ministry contributing 50% towards the net cost of the service. One Rodent Operator is engaged, and the following work was carried out during the year:—

Treatments at private dwellings ...	662
Treatments at business premises ...	56
Visits on investigation work ...	1594

**Disinfection.** Disinfection after the removal of patients suffering from Tuberculosis, or after death, was carried out at 24 houses. Four wards at the Musgrove Park Hospital were disinfected for other diseases.

**Verminous Houses.** Complaints received respecting vermin in houses are still at a low level. During the year only 9 houses were found to be infested, and these were satisfactorily treated with D.D.T. preparations.

**Offensive Trades.** There are six offensive trades established within the Borough, comprising two hide and skin depots, and six rag and bone merchants. These businesses were conducted without nuisance.

**Moveable Dwellings.** There are two moveable dwellings within the Borough licensed for occupation, and two licensed sites. The larger of the two sites situated at the bottom of East Reach on the South side was purchased by the Corporation in connection with the Holway Housing Site, and as a result the owner acquired a piece of land at Tangier with a view to continuing his business. This land

was licensed by the Corporation as a site for moveable dwellings, and the moveable dwellings were transferred to the new site during the summer. After vacation of the old site some trouble was experienced by unauthorized persons camping on the old site, but these ultimately moved off without recourse to proceedings in court.

## FOOD INSPECTION.

### Visits in connection with the inspection and supervision of food.

Slaughterhouses .....	717
Food shops .....	257
Food preparing premises .....	54
Wholesale Meat Depot. ....	31
Dairies, cowsheds and milkshops .....	127
Bakehouses .....	39
Ice-cream premises .....	58
Restaurants .....	13
Visits in connection with the sampling of water, milk and ice cream .....	240
Total	<u>1536</u>

**Dairies and Cowsheds.** There are five Dairy Farms, one wholesale milk factory, two wholesale producers of milk, and eighteen retailers within the Borough. In addition six retailers supply milk in Taunton from premises outside the Borough. Tuberculin Tested milk is supplied by twelve retailers within and five from outside the Borough. Pasteurised milk is supplied by seven retailers within and one from outside the Borough.

**Pasteurised Milk.** There are three producers of Pasteurised Milk within the Borough, and 151 samples were taken from these producers for the purpose of testing the efficiency of the pasteurising process and the cleanliness of the milk. One sample failed in the Phosphatase Test which indicated that pasteurisation had been inefficient, and on investigation it was found that the milk had not been held at the required temperature for the full period of 30 minutes. Three samples failed in the Methylene Blue Test, which indicated imperfect cleansing of that part of the plant coming into contact with the milk after pasteurisation. All adverse sample reports are brought to the notice of the producers, and an investigation carried out with a view to avoiding a recurrence.

**Ice Cream.** The manufacture and sale of ice cream again increased during the year. Ice cream is manufactured and retailed at 10 premises, and retailed only at 27 premises. The Public Health

Laboratory Service continued the scheme for the fortnightly testing of samples of ice cream for purity. Eighty-two samples of ice cream obtained from vendors within the Borough were submitted for examination. The results were as follows:—

	1948		1947
Grade 1	35 samples or 42.1%	} 73.4%	33 samples or 35.8%
Grade 2	26 " " 31.3%		21 " " 22.8%
Grade 3	11 " " 13.2%		15 " " 16.3%
Grade 4	11 " " 13.2%		23 " " 25.0%
			} 58.6%

From the foregoing it will be seen that some improvement took place during the year as compared with the results for 1947.

**Food Premises.** Two hundred and fifty-seven visits were made to food premises for the examination of foodstuffs. This resulted in the condemnation of the following commodities:—

### CANNED FOOD.

Fruit	.....	.....	.....	.....	286 tins
Condensed Milk	.....	.....	.....	.....	224 "
Fish	.....	.....	.....	.....	220 "
Peas and Beans	.....	.....	.....	.....	1089 "
Sausages	.....	.....	.....	.....	7 "
Beetroot	.....	.....	.....	.....	84 "
Corned Beef	.....	.....	.....	.....	382 "
Carrots	.....	.....	.....	.....	41 "
Pork	.....	.....	.....	.....	5 "
Jam	.....	.....	.....	.....	81 "
Mixed Vegetables	.....	.....	.....	.....	24 "
Mussels	.....	.....	.....	.....	27 "
Soup	.....	.....	.....	.....	67 "
Stewed Steak	.....	.....	.....	.....	7 "
Spaghetti	.....	.....	.....	.....	9 "

### OTHER FOODS.

Fish (wet)	.....	.....	.....	.....	41 stones
Kippers	.....	.....	.....	.....	11 "
Dried Beans	.....	.....	.....	.....	140 lbs.
Cheese	.....	.....	.....	.....	5 "
Cabbage	.....	.....	.....	.....	48 "
Potatoes	.....	.....	.....	.....	60 "
Dried Fruit	.....	.....	.....	.....	55 "
Biscuits	.....	.....	.....	.....	6 "
Cake Flour	.....	.....	.....	.....	72 pkts.
Dried Egg	.....	.....	.....	.....	8 "
Pickles and Sauces	.....	.....	.....	.....	98 jars
Pate de foie	.....	.....	.....	.....	6 "
Mincemeat	.....	.....	.....	.....	3 "
Fried Fish	.....	.....	.....	.....	133 pieces
Pikelets and Crumpets	.....	.....	.....	.....	201 (number)
Xmas Pudding	.....	.....	.....	.....	8 "



**Meat Inspection.** There are two slaughterhouses in use within the Borough, the Government Slaughterhouse and a bacon factory. The former supplies meat for Taunton Borough, Taunton Rural, Wellington Urban, Wellington Rural and Langport Rural Districts, and in addition carcasses are frequently exported to London and other centres.

The following animals were slaughtered during the year:—

Beasts	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1811
Cows	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	743
Sheep	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	13819
Calves	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1384
Pigs	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	12493
Total						<u>30250</u>

The inspection of the above carcasses revealed the disease as set out in the following table:—

	Cattle (excl. cows)	Cows	Calves	Sheep Lambs	Pigs
Number killed	1811	743	1384	13819	12493
Number inspected	1811	743	690	4990	12493
Whole carcasses condemned	3		4	39	14
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned	1063		30	1206	267
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than T.B.	41.7 %		4.9 %	24.9 %	2.2 %

### **Tuberculosis Only.**

Whole carcasses condemned	45	1	—	15
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned	530	1	—	1429
Percentage of the number inspected affected with T.B.	22.5 %	.028 %	—	11.5 %

## FACTORIES ACT, 1937.

### 1.—INSPECTIONS for purposes as to provisions as to health.

Premises	Number on Register	Number of		
		Inspections	Written Notices	Occupiers prosecuted
(1) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities.	18	15	4	—
(2) Factories not included in (1) in which Sec. 7 is enforced by the Local Authority.	104	77	2	—
(3) Other premises in which Sec. 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding out-workers' premises).	4	4	—	—
TOTAL ...	126	96	6	—

2.—Cases in which DEFECTS were found.

Particulars	Number of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted
	Found	Remedied	Referred		
			To H.M. Inspector	By H.M. Inspector	
Want of cleanliness ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Overcrowding ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable temperature ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate ventilation ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Ineffective drainage of floors... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Sanitary conveniences					
(a) Insufficient ... ..	3	2	—	3	—
(b) Unsuitable or defective ... ..	—	—	—	1	—
(c) Not separate for sexes ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to out-work) ... ..	5	5	—	2	—
TOTAL ...	8	7	—	6	—

**OUTWORK** (Sections 110 and 111)

Nature of Work	Section 110			Section 111		
	No. of out-workers in August list	No. of cases of default in sending lists to Council	No. of prosecutions for failure to supply lists	No. of instances of work in unwholesome premises	Notices served	Prosecutions
Making of wearing apparel ...	431	—	—	—	—	—

I am

Your obedient servant,

P. J. GOUGH,

*Chief Sanitary Inspector.*





*Printed by*  
Hammett & Co. (Taunton) Ltd.  
53, North Street  
Taunton  
92718